

the lap of lodgery

New Zealand has some seriously swanky hideaways, writes Rachael Oakes-Ash

TAHITI has its over-water bungalows, Africa its luxury safari camps and New Zealand its lodges.

What was once a remote but comfortable refuge from a day of outdoor activity is these days an intimate club, where those with cash to splash take refuge from life.

Think old-school with open fires, croquet, horse riding, fly-fishing and making the most of the scenery.

The average lodge has four to 20 bedrooms and there won't be a backpack in site.

They're not cheap, but honeymooners, baby boomers and people celebrating anniversaries are all saving their pennies to stay.

ESTABLISHMENT

Huka Lodge, Taupo, North Island
HUKA Lodge has attracted the elite in the world of business, politics and entertainment since it was little more than a campsite in the 1920s.

On the rainbow trout-laden Waikato River near Huka Falls, Huka Lodge has private hot pools, park-like gardens and a helipad to transport guests to fishing locations kilometres from nowhere.

Twenty lodge guest rooms, an owner's cottage with cathedral ceilings and four suites complete the accommodation.

The deal: From \$622 a person, including pre-dinner drinks, five-course dinner and breakfast.

www.selecthotels.com

URBAN RETREAT

Mollies, Auckland, North Island
WITH views of Waitemata Harbour, Mollies is a stiletto step from Auckland's CBD in the swanky suburb of Ponsonby.

Each of the 16 suites is different in design and layout and has a mix of old-world glamour and contemporary fun.

Chinese antiques sit alongside Philippe Starck designs and in-suite baby grand pianos and harps are provided for guests who want to make music. Then there's Jack, the general manager with a voice from heaven.

Drinks are at seven in the parlour and Jack will sing, so don't be late, and don't forget the tissues.

The deal: From \$443 for a junior suite, including breakfast.



Cottage industry: Huka Lodge sits beside the Waikato River.

GOLF HIDEAWAY

Kauri Cliffs, Northland, North Island
KAURI Cliffs lodge has the waters of Matauri Bay on one side and forest on the other in New Zealand's far north.

Nab the Owner's Cottage for its private infinity pool, hot tub and in-house chef, or bed down in one of the lodge's 16 cottage suites.

There's an international 18-hole golf course with fairways that plunge to the sea, deep-sea fishing safaris, kayaking, four-wheel-drive adventures and dining with a dress code (jackets for men).

The deal: From \$760 a person twin share in a deluxe suite with pre-dinner drinks, a la carte dinner, breakfast and complimentary mini bar.

ECO GLAM

Treetops, Rotorua, North Island
WE CAN'T tell you which Hollywood celebrities have enjoyed Treetops Lodge & Estate at Rotorua.

We can neither confirm nor deny Rene Zellweger sightings in the seven trout streams and four lakes in this 800-year-old forest.

We can say there has been many a marriage proposal at the property's waterfall and the 11 suites all reflect intimate, luxury eco living. This is wilderness with five-star appeal and matching cuisine.

The deal: From \$528 a person, including breakfast, cocktails and dinner.



Warm welcome: Huka Lodge has come a long way from its campsite origins.

THE DEAL

→ **Getting there:** Air New Zealand flies direct from Melbourne to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch with connecting internal flights close to most lodge destinations.
www.airnewzealand.com.au

→ **More information:** New Zealand Lodge Association
www.lodgesofnz.co.nz



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RURAL LUXURY

Wharekauhau, Palliser Bay, North Island

DRIVE 90 minutes through winding rural back roads from Wellington or arrive via a spectacular 10-minute chopper ride direct from the airport.

Wharekauhau is a working sheep station set on 5000ha.

There's a main Edwardian-style lodge in muted tones in which to mingle. Guests sleep cliffside, overlooking the bay in one of 12 high-beamed cottages.

Dining is fine and accompanied by award-winning wine.

The deal: From \$545 a person, including breakfast, pre-dinner drinks and gourmet dinner.

www.wharekauhau.com

SKI TIME

Whare Kea, Wanaka, South Island

WHARE Kea lodge, which perches lakeside in the Southern Alps town of Wanaka, has commanding views from every room, a Marco Pierre White-trained chef and no more than 12 guests at any time.

Behind the lodge sits Treble Cone, New Zealand's most-challenging skifield and gateway to serious heli

a helicopter and a pilot. It also has a seriously private mountain chalet with personal chef and housekeeper.

The deal: From \$447 a person a night, including four-course dinner and breakfast.

www.wharekealodge.com

ALPINE BEAUTY

Blanket Bay, Glenorchy, South Island

BLANKET Bay is a hunting-style lodge of stone and timber with postcard views of Lake Wakatipu and the Southern Alps.

This is *The Lord of the Rings* country and Peter Jackson and his cast stayed at Blanket Bay during filming.

Guest rooms and chalets have floor-to-ceiling glass to capture the view. There's a wine-cave dining cellar, sweeping balcony dining room and an impressive stock of New Zealand's finest wines.

Heli hike, heli ski, heli fish — a chopper pad is on site and there is a host of nature activities. There's also a health spa and pool.

The deal: \$855 for a double-occupancy lodge room, including dinner and breakfast for two.